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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 007234

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TAGS: ECON PGOV PHUM PINR PREL PTER UNSC VZ CO
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S OCTOBER 1 MEETING WITH FOREIGN
MINISTER ARAUJO

Classified By: Ambassador William R. Brownfield

Reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) The Ambassador reiterated to Foreign Minister Araujo on October 1 our commitment to obtaining U.S. congressional approval of the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and said we will need continued GOC support for the congressional delegations that will likely visit Colombia in the coming months. He noted that we publicly support facilitation efforts on a humanitarian accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), but view President Chavez' intentions with skepticism. Araujo said that the GOC strongly supports U.S. congressional visits to Colombia, and promised his full assistance. He questioned the FARC's intentions in talks on a humanitarian accord, and agreed the USG and GOC need to coordinate on this issue. Araujo reviewed GOC plans for the November 29-30 Group of 24 meeting in Bogota, and reiterated GOC concerns over its inclusion in Annex II of UN Security Council Resolution 1612. End Summary

¶2. (U) The Ambassador met October 1 with Foreign Minister Fernando Araujo for an introductory call and to review recent developments. Vice Foreign Ministers Camilo Reyes and Adriana Mejia, and the Director of the Foreign Ministry's Office of United States and Canadian Affairs Patricia Cortes accompanied Araujo. The DCM and Polcouns accompanied the Ambassador.

UNGA MEETING

¶3. (C) Foreign Minister Araujo briefed the Ambassador on his events at UNGA. He met President Bush at the presidential reception, and felt encouraged by the President's commitment to keep pushing for U.S. congressional approval of the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA). He voiced appreciation for his inclusion in an informal dinner hosted by the Secretary with selected other foreign ministers, and said the

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multilateral meeting on Colombia led by U/S Burns provided a useful opportunity to explain GOC policies to the Europeans. Araujo found the Europeans supportive of the GOC's policies, noting that he had a similar experience during his recent trip there. Even the European media appeared to have "an

objective understanding of the Colombian reality."

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

¶4. (C) The Ambassador said we continue to work to achieve congressional approval of the FTA. He thanked Araujo for the GOC's excellent support of the numerous congressional delegations that have visited Colombia over the last two months. We expect additional visits in the months ahead, and will ask for continued GOC assistance. Araujo said that the GOC would do everything possible to make the visits a success. Vice Foreign Minister Mejia added that President Uribe invited House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel to visit Colombia during his trip to New York.

PRESIDENT CHAVEZ AND THE HUMANITARIAN ACCORD

¶5. (C) The Ambassador noted that we publicly support all efforts to facilitate release of the hostages, including by Venezuelan President Chavez and Senator Piedad, but suspect neither shares the best interests of the USG or the GOC. If Chavez were to obtain the freedom of the other hostages without including the three U.S. citizens or if he were to orchestrate events to blame the USG or the GOC for the collapse of the facilitation effort, he would regard these as acceptable outcomes. We need to work with the GOC to ensure that the FARC and Chavez take the blame should the FARC not release the hostages.

¶6. (C) Araujo reiterated the GOC's insistence that the FARC include the three U.S. citizens in any humanitarian deal, and

said President Uribe does not support the return of FARC terrorists Simon Trinidad and Sonia from the United States. The FARC wants to use talks on an accord to gain international political status and to undermine the GOC. Araujo noted that during his time in FARC captivity, FARC leaders showed little concern for humanitarian issues*refusing to provide proof of life because they preferred to use the hostage' families' desperation to pressure the GOC. He agreed on the need to coordinate closely with the USG, but encouraged the USG kept its public comments on the issue to a minimum. The FARC would use any public U.S. statements to torpedo the process.

¶7. (C) Araujo said he met with Congressman William Delahunt in New York and advised caution in participating in a meeting with Chavez and the FARC. The Ambassador said Congressman James McGovern wrote to Senator Cordoba that he would attend such a meeting only if the FARC provided proof of life for the hostages. He agreed that the USG should limit public comments, but cautioned that sometimes we would need to speak out on our own hostages.

GROUP OF 24 (G-24) MEETING

¶8. (C) The Ambassador asked about the GOC's plans and objectives for the November 29-30 G-24 meeting in Bogota. Araujo said the Bogota meeting is part of the London-Cartagena process, and will provide a forum for the GOC, international community, and civil society to discuss priorities, concerns and strategies to address Colombia's challenges. Mejia explained that November 29 would provide civil society an opportunity to meet with the international community with the GOC participating as a guest. The GOC would host the next day's events, which would largely consist of government to government discussions. Mejia said the event would close with the issuance of a political declaration that the GOC currently has under negotiation with G-24 members.

UN RESOLUTION 1612 AND CHILD SOLDIERS

¶ 9. (C) Araujo said the GOC remains interested in being removed from Annex II of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612 on children in armed conflict. The Ambassador said he understood the GOC's concerns, but noted we would find it difficult to remove the GOC from the list. Still, he agreed to forward the GOC's request to the Department, with a recommendation that we try to meet as many GOC concerns as possible.

Brownfield